



## FIRST PERSON

# A win-win scenario for Banda Village

**A USAID small grant provides incentives for protecting the forest – while producing food for the community**



Photo Credit: Daniel Lapidus

***“Now I can provide food for my family without doing damage to the forest.”***

— *Marceline Muskamakuza, participant in the Banda Village Product Diversification Project*

When she was young, Marceline Muskamakuza used to collect firewood from the virgin rainforest to meet her families' energy needs, while the men in her family would hunt wild animals for personal consumption and to sell in the local market. Driven by the growing needs of the population and the lack of alternative resources, she had little understanding of the negative effects her actions were having on the forest.

Marceline lives in Banda, a village of 15,000 people located just north of Nyungwe National Park. Today, Marceline and her family are among the many participants of the “Banda Village Product Diversification Project,” funded by a grant from USAID, under the *Destination NYUNGWE* Project (DNP) implemented by International Resources Group.

DNP's primary objective is to jointly accelerate rural economic growth and improve biodiversity conservation in and around Nyungwe Forest National Park in southwestern Rwanda. DNP's small grants program helps create viable economic incentives for communities surrounding the Park to protect the forest.

With a grant from the DNP, in just two months, Marceline's village started an organic community garden that will feed the cooperative members' families, as well as market fresh produce to a new ecolodge that is being built on a hill overlooking the village. By increasing the productivity of the land and promoting nature-based tourism, community members now have clear economic incentives to protect the forest.

Marceline finds herself in a win-win situation, since she can now protect the forest while reaping the manifest benefits it provides. Through project-sponsored educational seminars, she recognizes that “the forest provides us with many benefits, such as fresh air, rain, and a habitat for diverse wildlife,” and it must be respected and conserved. “Now I can provide food for my family without doing damage to the forest,” says Marceline with pride.